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ABSTRACT

This report presents findings from Gamma, one of four school districts examined in a series of case studies that investigated the complex relationship between reading assessment and instruction. The research was situated in the context of school decision making. Teachers, principals, parents, students, and central office staff were interviewed to determine how decisions were made in the district and how that decision-making process influenced assessment and instruction. In addition, teachers were observed, and discussions were conducted with them about the observations. A constant comparative method was used to identify patterns in the data. Findings showed that in Gamma, "assessment" most often referred to the information that teachers gathered to inform instruction. This information was valued more highly than standardized test data. Assessment-as-test was seen as something that might inform curriculum, at the district, school, or classroom level--not as a means of controlling instruction. While the assistant superintendent acknowledged that part of this flexibility came from the consistently high standardized test scores Gamma students received, she also emphasized that it reflected the district's commitment to viewing teachers as professionals and to having them involved in all aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment through team meetings, school-wide committees, and district-level committees. Collegiality was highly valued for both teachers and students. How to assess and how to teach were often addressed within cooperative working groups to which each teacher belonged. (Two tables and four figures of data are included; a letter to schools describing the research project, and a list of interview and observation codes are attached.) (Author/RS)

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November 1993

## Center for the Study of Reading

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# CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF READING

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## ASSESSMENT AND DECISION MAKING IN GAMMA

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## Abstract

This report presents findings from Gamma, one of four school districts examined in a series of case studies that investigated the complex relationship between assessment and instruction. The research was situated in the context of school decision making. Teachers, principals, parents, students, and central office staff were interviewed to determine how decisions were made in the district and how that decision-making process influenced assessment and instruction. In addition, teachers were observed and discussions were conducted with them about the observations. The interviews were taperecorded and transcribed, and field notes from the observations were elaborated. A constant comparative method was used to identify patterns in the data. Findings showed that in Gamma, *assessment* most often referred to the information that teachers gathered to inform instruction. This information was valued more highly than standardized test data. Assessment-as-test was seen as something that might be used to inform curriculum, at the district, school, or classroom level. It was not seen as a means of controlling instruction. Whereas the assistant superintendent acknowledged that part of this flexibility came from the consistently high standardized test scores Gamma students received, she also emphasized that it reflected the district commitment to viewing teachers as professionals and to having groups of teachers involved in all aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In Gamma, this involvement took the form of dialogue--through team meetings, school-wide committees, and district-level committees. Collegiality, working together, was highly valued for both teachers and students. How to assess, like questions of how to teach, were often addressed within one of the many cooperative working groups to which each teacher belonged.

# ASSESSMENT AND DECISION MAKING IN GAMMA

The field of reading education generally seems to agree that assessment (defined as *testing*) drives instruction--that is, teachers teach to the test. A review of the literature suggests that this view of assessment is grounded, for the most part, in large-scale studies that have found that teaching practices change in response to pressures to increase student performance or to help them "do well" on standardized, norm-referenced tests (see, e.g., Herman & Dorr-Bremme, 1983; Popham et al. 1985; Salmon-Cox, 1981).

Those of us involved in this research project wondered what these findings meant in terms of particular teachers in particular classrooms in particular districts. Our wondering led us to formulate a number of specific questions: What was life like in a school that was attempting to raise its test scores? Were daily patterns of instruction in those schools different from those in schools that did not seem highly invested in raising test scores? What was the relationship between textbook orders (kind and company) to testing? Might an individual teacher feel unaffected by test pressures, yet be required to use materials that had been specifically chosen to match test items? And what about policies for passing versus retaining students? Might a teacher feel relatively free from test pressures during the year, then be told that only students with certain reading levels could pass to the next grade, a grade in which standardized tests were administered?

To address these questions, and thus to move our understanding from the abstract (research says that testing drives instruction) to the concrete (what does this mean in the lives of particular teachers/schools/districts?), we conducted case-study research in four school districts.[1]

For our research, we chose districts we thought would have different ideas about the relationship between assessment and instruction: (a) a district with a reputation for being a *low stakes* district--scores were acknowledged and then filed; (b) a *high stakes* or test-driven district; (c) a district known for its high test scores and the belief of its personnel that the consistent pattern of such scores gave them license to do pretty much whatever they wanted (although the district felt that the community would "pull in the reins" if test scores dropped); and (d) a district concerned about its test scores because of how they were perceived in the community. Personnel in this district worried that what they considered "low" test scores meant that their reading program needed to be changed. We designated these districts Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta.

We chose and contacted Alpha, Beta, and Gamma, explaining our interest to central office personnel and asking if their district would be willing to participate in the study. Meanwhile, the superintendent of the fourth district, Delta, contacted us and asked to participate in the study.

In our conversations with school personnel, we explained (see letter in Appendix A) that our interest was in the relationship between standardized tests and instruction, and that we wanted to situate both tests and instruction within a broader framework of instructional decision making so that we could better understand the more subtle influences of one on the other (e.g., textbook purchasing policies). We also explained that we were interested in the seldom talked about assessment that was not test (e.g., teacher observation) and the relationship of that form of assessment to instruction. All participants, therefore, understood that we were interested in decision making as it related to assessment (both as test and not-as-test) and instruction.

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[1]All four case studies are available as Center for the Study of Reading Technical Reports.

Before the study began, and based on time and staff limitations, we decided to focus on two buildings per district, two teachers per building. The districts responded differently to our plan. In Alpha, central office staff notified all teachers that we wanted to conduct a study and asked them to contact us if they were interested. In that district, 7 teachers in one building and 2 in another participated. In Beta, central office staff decided which buildings and teachers would participate. In Gamma and Delta, central office staff invited teachers and principals to a meeting to hear about the study and then choose two schools from among those interested.

We used interviews and observations as our means of collecting data, interviewing key participants in all four sites: central office personnel, principals, teachers, parents, and students. The interviews with teachers were tied to our observations of their classrooms. The first interview was held prior to the first observation, and conversation-like interviews were held after each of three observations. The fifth interview followed the final observation. With the participants' permission, the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Field notes were taken during the observations and elaborated afterward. These field notes were returned to the participants for their comments and, when appropriate, further elaboration.

The observations provided an opportunity to ground our interview questions in the concreteness of teachers' personal experiences. We could see which books they used, how they graded papers, and how they responded to students. We were then able to ask teachers about the relationship of those classroom-based decisions to the broader issues of assessment and instruction.

The data (audiotapes and elaborated field notes) were read and coded, using descriptive codes (see Appendix B). Tenuous labels emerged from the initial reading of the data. These codes were revised and refined until the codes adequately captured the content of what we had seen and heard. The codes were intended to facilitate analysis. The process of careful, descriptive coding also focused our reading of the data and helped us begin to identify patterns in the data.

After the coding was completed, one member of the research team took primary responsibility for each district. A constant comparative approach was used in the analysis. Each researcher read and reread the data, looking for and identifying patterns. Once patterns had been identified, the data were read at least one more time for evidence that might disconfirm the patterns. The researcher then presented the patterns in a case study that aptly captured what we had learned about assessment and instruction in that district.[2] Meanwhile, members of the research team continued to meet with each other, sharing possibilities and patterns. These case studies were returned to all participants for their feedback and changes, as necessary, were made in subsequent versions of the case studies.

Once we had a clear understanding of the patterns within districts, the data were read again. This time a new member of the research team, building conceptually on the analysis done in each district, reanalyzed all the data to identify patterns across districts. The data were then reread to confirm those patterns and identify salient examples, and read a final time to find negative cases, instances in which the pattern could not be confirmed. Once all patterns were confirmed, and therefore considered trustworthy, a cross-site analysis was prepared[3].

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[2]A fifth case study was conducted in Ohio. It is also available as a Technical Report.

[3]The cross-site analysis is also available as a Technical Report.

## The District in Context

One member of the research team, David Pearson, knew about the Gamma district through the assistant superintendent, Dr. Frances Malik, and thought that Gamma, a "low stakes" district with high test scores, might provide yet another view of decision making and an opportunity to study how that view would affect the relationship between assessment and instruction.

After contacting Dr. Malik, a meeting was arranged, and two members of the research team drove to Gamma to talk with principals and teachers from three schools. All three schools were interested in participating, and Dr. Malik selected two. We were given the names of teachers to contact for subsequent observations and interviews.

In the spring, we observed in four classrooms: Ms. Green and Ms. Cox at Gamma I, Ms. Roy and Ms. Lewis at Gamma II. Members of the research team talked with the teachers before during and after all three observations. Other members of the research team interviewed Dr. Rand, Superintendent; Dr. Malik, Assistant Superintendent; Ms. Ploughman and Ms. Arnold, principals of Gamma I and Gamma II, respectively. During the summer, the research team coded the interviews and fieldnotes. As we read and reread the data, we began identifying themes and patterns--threads which were interwoven and formed a tapestry. In the fall, we returned to the data in order to re-examine the patterns we had identified earlier. We began by focusing on literacy instruction.

## Literacy Instruction and Assessment in Four Classrooms

From the 1988 district report card we learned that there were 15,191 students in Gamma. Of these, 93% were Caucasian, 5% Asian, 1% Black, 0.6% Hispanic, and 0.2% Native American. Only .5% of the students enrolled came from low income families. (See Table 1 for additional comparisons.)

**[Insert Table 1 about here.]**

### Gamma I Observations

Gamma I School was located in a suburban neighborhood consisting of large, newly constructed homes. The school was a one-floor structure, consisting of wide hallways and large classroom spaces, and appeared to be as new as the surrounding neighborhood.

The lines of papier-maché masks that decorated the large display area across from the office and the bulletin boards throughout the school that displayed student art work and writing, gave an impression of creativity that seemed to characterize Gamma I School. Glistening floors, cheerful parent volunteers working in the centralized Learning Resource Center, and plaques that proclaimed appreciation for an outstanding janitorial staff all appeared to communicate that Gamma I was a proud school; proud of its staff, students, and all the individuals who made it a special place to be.

#### Ms. Green's Third-Grade Classroom

Literacy instruction in Ms. Green's room consisted of basal units and a complementary set of materials called CIRC, Cooperative and Integrated Reading Curriculum. Literacy instruction began with Ms. Green calling her class to the front and gathering them on the floor around her as she introduced the next chapter in the basal. A fresh bouquet of flowers had been placed on the round table next to the group. Ms. Green began sharing:

> I'm appreciative of Toby's Mom working with you on Georgia O'Keefe. Georgia O'Keefe was an artist interested in beauty. I noticed that Mark took the time to

> appreciate the flowers on our table when he came in this morning. He was interested in beauty also.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/12/89

After this introduction, Ms. Green reviewed a library book of O'Keefe's paintings and discussed the various things that O'Keefe found interesting. She mentioned that the flowers on the table were similar to the lupine flowers mentioned in the story. This began an introduction to the vocabulary words in the story.

> Ms. Green mentioned the first word, lupine and asked, "What is the next step, Jed?"
>
> Jed: You say are there any words you don't know?
>
> Ms. Green: Right! Damon?
>
> Damon: Sowing
>
> Ms. Green mentioned that there were two kinds of sowing. The first was like sewing a garment, making a shirt for example. The second had to do with sowing seeds, planting them.
>
> Ms. Green: These are both spelled differently. They sound the same but mean something different. What do we call words that are spelled differently, sound the same but have different meanings, Mark?
>
> Mark: Homophones
>
> Fieldnotes, Ms. Green's Classroom, 4/12/89

Phonics and the structure of language were taught within the context of vocabulary instruction. Often words were introduced by the students. One day a student used the word *figurehead*, for example, and Ms. Green then held a short discussion of compound words. At another point, Ms. Green mentioned the word *headlands* and told the group: "Let's see if we can find some context clues from our story to see what it might mean." At another time, Ms. Green suggested that a student read the definition of a particular word from the back of the basal.

After vocabulary instruction, Ms. Green read the introduction to the story and held a short discussion in which she asked the group what characters they had read about that had tried to make the world a better place. After this exercise, the group returned to their desks pairing off into partners. Ms. Green wrote on the blackboard:

1. 3 predictions
2. Silent read part 1
3. Partner read part 1
4. Treasure hunt part 1
5. Review vocabulary with partner.

In an interview later, Ms. Green mentioned that this was a valuable time for her to assess exactly where individuals were in their reading:

> You get to hear your students read much more frequently than you do when you have small groups because you are free to walk around and listen to them read and they are not aware....it is extremely less intimidating to them, but you certainly have a better handle as to what's going on.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/12/89

Ms. Green added that, in listening, she often took that information as a sort of inner record of students' strengths and weaknesses, adding, "I probably do more things inwardly than outwardly."

Students were often asked to draw a continuum and assess themselves as to how they performed socially in their groups as well as how they had worked academically. Ms. Green mentioned that she found student self-assessments particularly useful when parents ask why a student may not be doing particularly well at a given point in time.

Ms. Green told us that her view of assessment was one of a cooperative effort between students, teacher, and parents that served to communicate and share the dialogue of learning; she felt it was important for parents to know the positive things that students had accomplished and spoke of making "hundreds of phone calls." She said that philosophy of teaching was one in which teachers built upon a child's strengths and minimized weaknesses.

Ms. Cox's Fourth-Grade Classroom

Ms. Cox had been teaching in this district for four years. She said that she usually grouped desks in her room in fours, an arrangement that reflected the district effort to incorporate cooperative learning as an essential part of each classroom. However, due to Iowa Basic Skills testing, the desks had been arranged in rows, something which Ms. Cox conceded gave her "a reason to use rows." She explained, "I couldn't stand the talking."

There were three bulletin board displays in Ms. Cox's room. One contained various newspaper clippings under the heading, "Current Events." Another contained guidelines for cooperative learning groups: Reader, Recorder, Forming Groups, Encourager, Checker, and Cooperation. Each category contained a series of written rules. A third area displayed student work.

Like other teachers in this district, Ms. Cox began each day with Mini-Math and Mental Math. Mini-Math was a small 6"-by-6" worksheet of eight mathematical problems that involved problem solving. Students worked on this at the start of the class period. Ms. Cox told us that she used whole group instruction to review problems and concepts and allowed the class to grade their own papers to allow them to learn from their mistakes.

Ms. Cox modeled the mathematical processes involved by solving the problems before the class, or having a student do so at the chalkboard. For example, in one group session she suggested,"You can watch me to see if you agree with what I'm thinking." When Ms. Cox solved a math problem at the blackboard, she put a check mark next to each process in the division problem and instructed her students to do the same in their work, so "that they kept seeing that math is nothing but patterns and they kept seeing the patterns."

Mental Math was precisely what the name implied. Students were asked eight mathematical problems which were solved mentally, without using pencil and paper. Ms. Cox was, in part, responsible for the district incorporation of mental math. She had been doing this in her classroom, and it was later

introduced to the whole district. Both Mini Math and Mental Math appeared to be a part of the math curriculum adopted by all the teachers at Gamma I.

Ms. Cox had 20 students in reading. Ms. Cox stated that "right now for reading, nobody has given us guidelines to say this is what you do." She said their accountability came from the administration of a unit test composed of comprehension and skills from the basal series. Otherwise, she felt free to choose materials and activities. "If I want to do a writing project with my reading class I can do that. No one says I have to. I can choose to read stories out loud to my students...My choice."

Like the other teachers we observed in Gamma, a majority of Ms. Cox's literacy instruction involved basal materials and utilized whole group instruction, followed by activities that students did in cooperative groups. Individual differences in ability were addressed either with one-on-one instruction during the daily 20-minute SSR (sustained silent reading) period after lunch, in the Learning Resource Center, or in various school programs such as the gifted program.

Ms. Cox incorporated some of the CIRC materials in her reading instruction, but said she still relied heavily on basal materials. CIRC materials were used primarily in place of workbook items that would normally accompany the basal series. This method incorporated the various strategies for cooperative learning groups, as well as critical thinking skills and strategies for approaching text successfully.

On one day of our observation, the basal story centered around a main character who was a park ranger. Ms. Cox asked the class how many of them had visited a national park. Students identified the location of the parks on a map and discussed the activities one might enjoy at a park. Ms. Cox then introduced Muir Woods, a park she had visited and the one in which the story took place. She shared postcards with the class and gave them various facts about the redwoods. For example, one postcard told the various historical events that occurred in relation to the life of trees. Students were then asked to form a circle equal to the girth of one tree. In the course of this introduction she posed a mental math question involving the statistics of a tree and integrated the subject with a lesson on shade-loving trees that they had studied in science.

Ms. Cox then explained the assignment for the story, a worksheet in which the students had to produce additional questions that could have been asked of the ranger. Students were then dismissed from whole-group instruction to work cooperatively in groups.

During this time, Ms. Cox circulated around the room. "I guess I just walk around and see if they're on task, if they're doing what they're supposed to be doing, and if they're not then I might ask them if they understood what they were supposed to be doing." The following class periods would contain additional activities to be carried on in cooperative groups. One worksheet for this story was addressed to the group "Discussion Directors." It contained questions that were introduced with discussion starters such as, "How do you feel about..."; the students generated the rest. Individual groups determined the questions that would be asked about the story. All answers were recorded with appropriate text references.

Another activity that illustrated how cooperative learning took place in this classroom was a worksheet addressed to the "Oral Reading Leaders." The students were to choose parts of the story to read aloud. Their choices were to be based on these criteria: (1) Appeals to the senses--sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste, (2) Vivid Setting, (3) Point of View, (4) Humorous, (5) Well-developed characterization, (6) Similes or Metaphors, (7) Lots of detail. As students selected the passages they wanted to read to their group, they recorded the page, the paragraph, the number of the reason, and an explanation of why it was chosen.

All of Ms. Cox's students went to the Learning Resource Center for supplemental reading or math activities. She told us that she grouped her students by ability for the LRC sessions. At the beginning

of the year, students were placed in these groups according to their Iowa scores and basal tests from previous years. Later Ms. Cox relied on her own classroom activities to make adjustments in this placement.

## Gamma II Observations

Gamma II School was a newly constructed, one-story, brick structure located in the center of an equally new, affluent neighborhood. When entering Gamma II, one was impressed by the spaciousness of hallways and large office area. The principal's office resembled a corporate office--large, with modern furniture, all giving the appearance of efficiency. It was not an isolated part of the school, but rather seemed to be the organizational hub of the school.

Like other schools in Gamma, all hallways and classrooms at Gamma II extended from a centrally located Learning Resource Center. The Learning Resource Center at Gamma II was filled with a wide assortment of materials, learning aides, and many computers, all coordinated by parent volunteers who were supervised by the Learning Resource Coordinator. Classrooms in Gamma II utilized the Learning Resource Center as they did in Gamma I.

The arrangement of classrooms in this school suggested a collegial communication model. Classrooms were large, spacious, and grouped in pods or clusters of four. Two walls of each classroom were folding; one was solid, housing cabinets, blackboards, materials and equipment. Rather than a fourth wall that would separate classrooms from one another, classrooms adjoined in a central area where four teachers' desks were grouped together.

Our observations in this school all included instances of teachers talking occasionally to one another from their classroom areas, and projectors and materials traveling back and forth. There was a sense of community. Even students seemed united in the cooperative purpose that they were here to learn, to do, and to accomplish.

### Ms. Roy's Fourth-Grade Classroom

Ms. Roy appeared to be quite comfortable with the collegial model of her school. She valued team decisions, and her classroom reflected these decisions. Of her team, Ms. Roy told us:

> Everybody pulls their materials together and then we can look at what we all have and decide which is the best thing to use or which fits into what we want to do.
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/12/89

Ms. Roy obviously enjoyed her students and complimented them often on the great things they had accomplished or the good choices they had made. Students were expected to make decisions throughout a well-organized day, which they did. Ms. Roy used a timer to control the time given to various classroom activities.

> When you put the children into groups they seem to react better if they hear the timer go off because they know it's time to stop and to go back to their seats. I do use it quite a bit. When they study their spelling words in spelling, I just set the timer and tell them they have ten minutes to study because it frees you up from kids asking, "How much time do we have left, what time is it?"
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/20/89

Literacy in Ms. Roy's classroom involved many activities and a variety of reading materials. Students read a wide range of trade books. Ms. Roy encouraged her students to read, with frequent comments such as, "Damen, I love to see you reading!" When students finished classroom assignments, they often chose to read trade books. On some occasions, Ms. Roy read to her class from a trade book before moving from one classroom activity to another, or as a reward for students working diligently through the morning without a break.

It was a team decision to have reading groups based on ability. Ms. Roy instructed the high reading group. She used a basal series and materials that complemented the basal. From time to time, a novel unit would be used in place of the basal. This reflected the district initiative to encourage teachers to use novel units in their classrooms.

Reading instruction in Ms. Roy's classroom began with reading activities. These included such things as discussion of main idea, author's purpose, vocabulary enrichment, and prediction. Prereading discussions were usually conducted with the whole group. Ms. Roy guided her students with questions such as, "What's the author's purpose?" or "What are adjectives?" On one day of our observation, Ms. Roy discussed what the main idea of a story might be. She then read a portion of the story to her class.

Ms. Roy: What does it mean if they're going to multiply, Eric?

Eric: Have babies.

Ms. Roy: Rachel?

Rachel: They are going to double.

Ms. Roy allows a few more children to give an answer.

Ms. Roy: What does the author of these two paragraphs want to get across by his or her story?

Rose: How lakes and ponds change over the years.

Ms. Roy elicits more responses from her students, then asks the class,

Ms. Roy: Where might you find an article like this, Tom?

Fieldnotes, Ms. Roy's Classroom, 4/20/89

At the conclusion of these introductory activities, the students were instructed to complete a few pages that addressed base words. This was followed by a cooperative learning activity. In this activity, students were asked to work with partners and group eight words from their story under possible categorical word headings. Partners then discussed various possibilities:

Ms. Roy asks the class to sit on the floor at the front of the room. She asks how many circles they have used to group the words.

Some students use three circles to group the eight words, others use four.

Ms. Roy: Here are the words on cards. [Ms. Roy is referring to flashcards that have the vocabulary words that the students have been using on their (grouping)

worksheets. They are posted on the board in front of the class.]

Ms. Roy: Who would like to put the words all together in one group on the board?

About 10 students raise their hands.

Ms. Roy calls on Greta.

Greta groups on another part of the board the words, *brackish, glimpse, bogs,* and *marshes*. Then she writes below them "Words I don't know."

Fieldnotes, Ms. Roy's classroom, 4/20/89

Ms. Roy discussed this grouping with her students and asked other partners to share the various word groupings they had come up with. She then broadened the discussion by asking other questions such as, "What is the base word of pollution?" In another instance, when students labeled one set of words as "plant words," Ms. Roy used the opportunity to discuss plant growth and decay and the relationship between larvae and plants.

Writing was an integral part of Ms. Roy's literacy instruction. On one day of our observations, Ms. Roy's class was working on a persuasive writing essay. In this particular assignment, students were to write an essay responding to the mayor's statement that television sets should be unplugged by conscientious parents. The class had been working on this for a week, something that Ms. Roy complimented them on.

Sara, Robert, boys and girls, you did a really nice job on a lengthy piece of work that you've worked on over a week.

Ms. Roy, 4/20/89

Prior to our observation, they had worked on their essays in cooperative groups, getting suggestions from peers as to how their papers could be improved.

Literacy instruction in Ms. Roy's classroom often became a dialogue, a discussion of skills, strategies, and content areas topics. Students seemed quite comfortable in this atmosphere, freely offering suggestions and responses, and generating new ideas. It is important to note that, though this dialogue was teacher-controlled for the most part, students willingly responded without needing to be prompted. They seemed to be well aware of and comfortable in their role as learners, which was both to respond and to question.

Ms. Lewis's Fourth-Grade Classroom

Ms. Lewis and Ms. Roy were on the same grade-level team, which meant the two shared the same office space and had adjoining classroom space. Ms. Lewis communicated a thorough understanding of district decision-making and the roles of various administrators in her district. She was well aware of her building goals, decided upon cooperatively by teachers and administrators, namely, the team approach, thinking skills, and cooperative learning. She felt that she was required to support these initiatives in her classroom.

Ms. Lewis used the same basal reading materials as Ms. Roy and emphasized the writing curriculum that originated from their team discussions. She also used the Cooperative and Integrated Reading Curriculum (CIRC) that complemented the basals, instead of using the basal workbooks. For this reason, Ms. Lewis's reading instruction followed a pattern similar to those of the other three Gamma teachers. The story was introduced to the whole group and followed by specific activities in which students worked in cooperative groups. During these activities, Ms. Lewis moved around the room watching what students were doing. At times, she interrupted a group activity to instruct students or give them additional direction.

Ms. Lewis was on the Writing Committee, and her classroom offered many opportunities for students to write. For example, one section of a bulletin board in this room was titled "Novelist's Notebook" and contained various student-made books. Another section was titled, "The Trophy" and contained student writing that followed the starter, "The trophy was large and had my name on it because I had broken a world's record. I had worked for months and months in preparation for the record breaking event. It all started when I decided to...." The class cooperatively wrote books that covered topics such as, *Memories*, *If I Were A Teacher*, and *Insects*.

As the class books indicated, Ms. Lewis integrated writing assignments with content-area topics or activities. For example, writing was used to teach language arts. She also had an optional writing assignment area in which students were given credit for writing and given the opportunity to use writing in a creative way.

On one day of our observations, Ms. Lewis's classroom worked on the persuasive writing activity developed by Ms. Lewis's team and described earlier in Ms. Roy's classroom. Ms. Lewis used a timer to block out the time allotted to classroom activities; in this instance, the time allotted for students to work on editing while in cooperative groups.

There was also a portion of the day which was called "Writing Folders." During this time, students could write on topics of their own choosing. Ms. Lewis also used this time to confer with students who had work in progress. Students could also choose to go to the Learning Resource Center to have their homemade books published at that time.

Other school goals were evident in Ms. Lewis's classroom. At the time of our observations, one wall of Ms. Lewis's room was decorated with a very large--about 5' tall--ice-cream cone. These were labeled with the thinking skills being encouraged by the school:

guess and check
simplify the problem
work backwards
make a logic chart
make a table or chart
make a list
draw a picture
use manipulative
act it out

Ms. Lewis began reading instruction with the whole group, using a teacher guided question and answer format. Students responded freely--a characteristic of classrooms in Gamma. When the response was not what Ms. Lewis wanted, she prompted her students to resolve the question collaboratively by saying, "discuss with neighbor" and students did so.

On one morning of our observation, Ms. Lewis's students were discussing a basal story about gerbils. We noticed how Ms. Lewis integrated reading strategies within the context of her basal instruction.

Ms. Lewis: What happened just before Tommy, Cynthia, and Chris told Roger about the gerbils?

Students do not respond.

Ms. Lewis: You can reread. The question was, "What happened just before Tommy, Cynthia and Chris told Roger about the gerbils?"

The students have their books with them and begin to look at them.

Ms. Lewis: Discuss with a neighbor.

The students talk with peers sitting near them.

Ms. Lewis: Raise your hand when you know.

Several students raise their hands.

Fieldnotes, Ms. Lewis' Classroom, 4/12/89

It was interesting to note that during the same instructional segment, Ms. Lewis covered vocabulary words such as "legal," discussed base words, as well as incorporated a mathematical problem that asked how many gerbils the boy in the story would need to get in order to get half. After these activities, Ms. Lewis moved the group toward a discussion of sequencing. She directed the class to look for the signal word that would help them keep track of the sequence of events in a story.

## Communication and Decision Making in Gamma

### Corporate Parallels

In our visits to these four Gamma classrooms, we were struck both by their uniqueness and by their similarities to one another. These similarities also appeared in our conversations with principals and central office administrators. Educators in Gamma seemed to have a clear and shared sense of purpose. It became evident that there was an efficient flow of information and communication about school that permeated the entire district.

Initially, these features led us to compare the district to a well-oiled machine producing a good product. However, the more time we spent thinking about all the individual parts and how they worked, the more it became apparent that the appropriate metaphor was not a machine, but a corporation. There were many departments, many jobs, and many employees, all driven by a clear sense of the service that was to be offered to the parents and students as consumers.

This analogy was a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of the decision-making process in this district. The parallels between the patterns we had identified in this district and the characteristics of management examined by Peters and Waterman (*In Search of Excellence*, 1982) were striking. First, there was a continuous dialogue between members of the school community: parents, administrators, teachers, and students. Peters and Waterman referred to this characteristic as an "intensity of communication." Communication involved dialogue among teachers, parents, and

administrators concerning any issue related to improving instruction in Gamma. For example, all talked about the process that was used to review existing school programs, various ways to improve student or teacher performance, and about the task groups that were formed to search for new opportunities for improving education. What was revealed through all this talk was that ideas for improving Gamma could originate from a multitude of sources:

> It could be from principals, sometimes from community leaders. Sometimes it will come from the teacher group asking the administration to look at something. One thing that I have found fascinating about this district is that any one person generates anything.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

These dialogues were often initiated as a means of finding "better" solutions:

> Notions, ideas emerge from the faculty...a new way to address a problem, perhaps a program to address a need that is going, whatever. Or it comes from some part of the administrative staff, probably in our system someone like Frances Malik. Anyone who knows of a new program somewhere, a better way of doing something, a better mouse trap that's been built.
>
> Dr. Rand, 4/10/89

Second, many individuals networked to meet various goals. Peters and Waterman refer to this as a "productivity through people with a bias for action." Ideas in Gamma were shaped by involving and inviting many participants, with the intent of reaching the best solutions to satisfy the needs of the district's consumer, its students and parents. Consumer ideas and feedback were important:

> If the district is investigating a possibility of making or changing something, for instance, and a decision along those lines needs to be made, they will go out and present that idea to lots of different publics, principals and many times even union representatives, parent groups. They'll gather a lot of data, input from the various sources, and then they will make a recommendation on (the basis of) what decision is in the best interest of the school district, as representing all of those different publics, and they'll make those recommendations to the superintendent.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

At this point in our analysis we realized that staff at Gamma had a clear idea of the direction in which they wanted to move in order to achieve their goal of providing the best education possible. This effort was to be a cooperative one, involving as many participants as possible from both school and community. Avenues for communication that promoted dialogue were the keys to the success of the Gamma model. Through our examination of communication power, change, and leadership in Gamma, we identified three other characteristics in Gamma that are often identified in excellent corporations:

"chunking" / teams

"a context for being the best" / staff development

"a willingness to experiment" / classrooms used as laboratories

*Chunking*

> There is an underlying principle here, an important trait of the action orientation that we call *chunking*. That simply means breaking things up to facilitate organizational fluidity and to encourage action. The small group is the most visible of the chunking devices. Small groups are, quite simply, the basic organizational building blocks of excellent companies.
>
> (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 126)

Teams served to form intimate units for dialogue and ensured the flow of ideas throughout the district. This statement by Ms. Ploughman illustrated how avenues for communication were formed through team meetings.

> We have a curriculum resource person that's assigned to every building half time. It's a link to Central Office which I think is really unique to this school district. So the assistant principal, myself, the curriculum research specialist and our learning center director, we meet with at least one team a week and we rotate so that every six weeks we meet with a team on a regular basis. They have their team meetings every week but then we sit in on a team meeting every fifth or sixth week. So, we are having as much dialogue as we can related to curriculum issues.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

As Ms. Roy noted:

> Working with a team of four, rather than working by yourself, extends decision making a lot.
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/12/89

Each team member was also a member of additional committees, such as the school goals committee, the writing committee, or the leadership committee. These committees served as links between and across schools, administrators, and teachers in Gamma. In this way, ideas that were generated in grade-level team meetings could be shared with others in the district, and ideas from cross-school committee meetings could be shared with grade-level team members.

For example, in one school Ms. Roy and Ms. Lewis were on the same grade level and also served on additional committees. Ms. Roy explained how the committees worked:

> What they try to do is to get people from a variety of buildings at grade levels. I'm on the Science Committee and Ms. Lewis is on the Writing Committee. The committees meet and people give input. We can tell Ms. Lewis, for example, at a team meeting that we want the committee to talk about this or that, and then she goes back to the committee and they formulate the curriculum.
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/12/89

Grade level teams worked cooperatively to plan and assess curriculum, evaluate student needs, and support one another academically and affectively.

> We, as a team, are trying to figure what we're doing with writing. We're doing types of writing--persuasive, to inform, or to entertain. Then we're going to zero in and say we're going to teach this and this and this under entertainment and this and this and this under to inform. We don't all have to do that but we want to have a broad base of ideas...we have to talk about all kinds of problems, field trips, textbooks, whatever.
>
> Ms. Cox, 4/20/89

At times, the teams were so cooperative and symbiotic that individual teachers found it difficult to separate what might have been their own ideas from those of the team. For example, in response to the use of weekly math tests used in her classroom Ms. Cox stated:

> I don't know if these are my option or not because I've always done it because my teammates have always done it....really my first year I can't say I had a lot of input into my team as to what I was doing. I really was their shadow.
>
> Ms. Cox, 4/20/89

A context for being the best

> They provide an opportunity to be the best, a context for the pursuit of quality and excellence. They offer support--more celebration; they use small, intimate units; and they provide within protected settings opportunities to stand out.
>
> (Peters and Waterman, 1982, p. 60)

This district offered a multitude of training opportunities for teachers throughout the school year. Teachers were free to decide which workshops to attend. A grade-level team could decide, for example, to attend workshops that addressed specific areas of curriculum or instruction.

> There's constant staff development going on in this district, bringing in people from universities and other school districts all the time. Continual professional growth is good.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, principal, 4/22/89

> There are workshops going on constantly and you will see a cross section of new teachers [and] teachers that have been here for a tremendous amount of time, teachers that are here for a short amount of time, taking these workshops and interacting among them. Like I said the district is real good about when you have that type of situation where it is not a lecture type of thing, where it is a hands on, cooperative learning and exchanging of ideas also. So they are not just out there taking in things and then taking them back, they are sharing what is working, what's not working, what their frustrations are.
>
> Ms. Green, teacher, 4/19/89

Teams also could initiate workshop ideas or request how presenters might be used. Ms. Cox's team attended a writing workshop by a nationally known consultant. Her team requested additional release time to meet with the consultant.

> We had release time and we got to talk with her, my team, for a couple of hours. We listened to her for a half day, and then she was brought back and we could request

> what we wanted her to do for this half day, whether we wanted her to do a lesson and watch her do a lesson in somebody's class, or if we could bounce ideas off of her, and we chose to bounce ideas.
>
> Ms. Cox, teacher, 4/27/89

Workshops often implemented district initiatives, as Ms. Lewis told us:

> Strategies that are supported by the district such as cooperative learning, problem solving, use of thinking skills, Harvey Silver's program, these things are things that are stressed by the district and they have had the experts come in and teach classes and then had other teachers trained to teach other teachers.
>
> Ms. Lewis, teacher, 4/12/89

Another teacher explained that central administration communicated areas of importance through workshops:

> I think part of that, we have classes we can take...Going to those classes, I don't know how this came about, but you talk to people....find out what they're doing.....everybody's doing it.
>
> Ms. Cox, teacher, 4/20/89

Once the district adopted a curriculum or instructional initiative, teachers who had attended workshops and had successfully applied workshop ideas in their classroom might be asked to conduct workshops themselves. Figure 1 illustrates how curriculum was assessed, revised, and adopted in Gamma.

**[Insert Figure 1 about here.]**

However, some teachers felt that the workshops offered by the district tended to be one factor that limited their decision making. In reference to workshops strongly recommended by the district, Ms. Cox told us:

> In our contract we have time release days, I guess they're called. We hoped that in the contract we could use this release time to work with our team. Instead, they plan activities for us. It's like we're not capable of making our decision to use our time wisely if somebody isn't telling us exactly what to do whereas that isn't the case at all. We want some time to work together within our own fourth-grade level to work on our writing project or work on our reading project. So that's a sore point.
>
> Ms. Cox, 4/20/89

Administrators were aware of the rigorous nature of teacher training in Gamma. In addition to workshop training in new initiatives, weekly team meetings, as well as regular classroom demands, time was a commodity in short supply. Ms. Arnold told us:

> I think the most frustrating thing for them [teachers] is time. Time for planning and pulling together all the resources.
>
> Ms. Arnold, 4/10/89

Workshops served to prepare teachers to experiment with new teaching strategies or curriculum ideas in their classrooms. By participating in hands-on workshops, teachers were more willing to try initiatives encouraged by the district.

A willingness to experiment

> [Excellent companies] give their employees a mission as well as a sense of feeling great. Every man becomes a pioneer, an experimenter, a leader. The institution provides guiding belief and creates a sense of excitement, a sense of being a part of the best, a sense of producing something of quality that is generally valued.
>
> (Peters and Waterman, 1982, p. 323)

Our observations and interviews presented a picture of classrooms that were used as laboratories for experimentation and change, for testing out new ideas, which "sometimes work and sometimes need to be refined." On the day that we had scheduled our observation in Ms. Green's classroom, for example, she had planned to present a new cooperative learning science activity. The class was to form teams, generate ideas, and try to produce a working model, using styrofoam cups, paper clips, yarn, and other craft supplies. When asked where she had received the idea for such an activity, it was not surprising to learn that it was from a workshop she had attended.

Teachers were well aware that they might be instrumental in district-wide reforms that originated in their classrooms. Ms. Cox noted that her idea of using "Mental Math" in her classroom was so successful that, "they decided to introduce it to the whole district." Ms. Green stated that she attended a CIRC (Cooperative and Integrated Reading Curriculum) workshop and decided to share this with her team. Her team members saw how well it worked in her classroom and were beginning to use it in their classrooms as well.

Ms. Lewis was on the Gamma II Thinking Skills committee. The goal of this committee was to expose the staff to three different strategies each year. She explained the process of introducing and training teachers in order to facilitate classroom experimentation:

> Our goal was to expose the staff to three different strategies each year so we would cover them all. So that meant getting background...doing the strategy with the teacher, having them try it out in their classroom and having them come back and processing what they had done. So it was really like a four-step (process).
>
> Ms. Lewis, 4/12/89

The Gamma decision-making model encouraged teachers to try new initiatives by giving collegial support to their efforts. Both principals in Gamma felt a desire to support individual or team initiatives whenever possible and justified. Workshops that were often "hands-on" encouraged teachers to try new ideas in their classrooms by allowing them to become familiar and comfortable with new curriculum ideas and strategies. This served to ensure a certain degree of success when these ideas were extended into the classroom.

> I want them (teachers) to be decision makers and trust themselves. Some people are not willing to take that kind of risk because then they have to be held accountable for the decision they made. If you stick with that basal program it's very easy to say that this is what the book says I'm supposed to teach and they didn't make that decision because the book was given to them to teach from.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

## Communication in Gamma

It became clear that decision making in Gamma was characterized by clear lines of communication. Figure 2 presents these lines of communication as arrows indicating the direction of the flow of information. The black arrows at the top of the model show that administrators all felt that they shared their ideas and directives with both the community (represented by the white background) and the teachers (the second row in the model). The arrows also indicated that administrators felt it was important to be responsive to teacher ideas and to the community (represented by the white arrows).

**[Insert Figure 2 about here.]**

In many of the statements made by teachers, administrators, and parents, it was clear that the school felt a commitment to be responsive to the voice of the parents as consumers.

> There are community task forces set up all the time in the district. Every building has a home and school association and a home and school board that can give input to the decisions for purchases within every school, that can give their voice related to whatever they feel is a district need or concern that they would have.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

> I have heard though that Gamma is responsive, very responsive to the parents, so I do feel more confident in this school system, that if there is a problem, for some reason, I don't know why, apparently public opinion here brings a lot of pressure to bear on those who are in charge, but I do feel that if it was certain things, I probably would get a response.
>
> Ms. Kline, parent, Gamma I School, 4/10/89

The degree to which principals felt committed to parent dialogue varied between schools. However, the district valued feedback from the consumer and encouraged parental input:

> Some of the principals are very open to discussing things with parents and some aren't. We are fortunate that we have one who does take into account parents and does contact parents, asking for input in certain areas. Not about curriculum or school policies but about that which would affect students. Lots of times they ask for help in trying to get information to contact other parents.
>
> Ms. Anderson, parent, Gamma I School, 4/10/89

Ms. Green explained that the school listened to parents when they evaluated classroom curriculum:

> There was a survey that went home about the middle of the year, and they asked parents how they felt about the new reading program. The parents really didn't have a good handle on the reading program because they hadn't seen as much as they had before. But they said, "All I can tell you is that my kids are reading much more than they ever have before."
>
> Ms. Green, 4/12/89

The Gamma school district made an effort to communicate an open-door policy to parents. One parent, Ms. Anderson, explained it this way:

> I think most parents feel very comfortable coming in and saying, "What's going on? Can we sit down and talk about it?" And they are going to make time to do that, so the communication is very important, and we are very fortunate to have that communication to where you can come in and talk and people are available.
>
> Ms. Anderson, 4/10/89

The school system also provided opportunities for parents to be informed about Gamma. The superintendent gave this example:

> We have a process that all new courses...all text materials, etc., are put on public display for a period of no less than four weeks, not only public display here at this facility, but on display at the public library.
>
> Dr. Rand, 4/10/89

It was clear that teachers were not only aware of the parental role within the school, but also felt that parents had very high expectations regarding the kind of education their children should be getting.

> It's a pretty affluent district. The parents are very educated. Most of them have been to college at least and have their own businesses and that sort of thing. They expect a lot.
>
> Ms. Roy, teacher, 4/12/89

> I believe that parents have a lot to do with what happens in this district. They are extremely demanding, extremely demanding.
>
> Ms. Green, teacher, 4/12/89

Parents were a very active and visible part of school in Gamma and were responsible for many programs offered in Gamma:

> There are so many parents involved here at Gamma I...we have an *art appreciation program* which is an enrichment into the art....we also have *literature appreciation* which is pushing some of the excellent authors that kids may not have had an opportunity to study....we do *assemblies*....we have the freedom here to *help with math*, to *work with the kids in the LRC* because we have the prescription learning.....parents come in and do *after school activities* with the kids, it can be anything from a *craft activity to a science workshop* to having someone who knows how to knit...we have a *Gamma I Printshop* where every student is writing a book....now that is home and school...that's all parents but again it's parent volunteers that come in a read the story, proof read the stories, put it into a final form and bind it, type it whatever.
>
> Ms. Anderson, parent, Gamma I School, 4/10/89

Parents became an active part of the school by staffing the Learning Resource Center located at the center of each school in Gamma. The Learning Resource Center housed in the library supplemented curriculum and instruction in each school in this district. Teachers sent each student to the LRC with a prescribed program--sometimes they enlisted parents to provide reinforcement or practice activities, other times they requested enrichment materials. All the instruction in the LRC was done by volunteer parents supervised by a learning specialist.

Lines of communication were also clearly established for teachers who were in frequent two-way contact with administrators, other teachers, parents, and students. Teachers spoke often of parent- teacher communications, noting parental awareness defined both by teachers talking with parents (indicated by arrows directed toward the white background) and by parents in turn, accessing teachers (indicated by the white background forming arrows toward the teacher row). Teachers communicated with students (the third row) both as individuals or as groups.

Students were also part of the communication network. Systems were established so that they could work with each other, with teachers, and with their parents. Special school projects, for example, often were to be completed in the home. Parents were also asked to monitor their child's independent reading at home.

This model allowed us to visualize the dynamics involved in maintaining dialogue between all participants in decision making. The model was also useful in illustrating how the decision-making process included various members of the Gamma district. We began to question where decisions originated. Was decision-making power equally dispersed in this district? Did district policy originate from teachers, from administrators, or was this a district that shared decision-making power?

## Decision Making in Gamma

Teachers indicated that they felt they had a great deal of power. When asked what decisions she felt she could make, for example, Ms. Roy responded:

> It seems like it's everything! I make decisions as to what I'm going to teach, and how I'm going to present it, what I'm going to do if it goes over well, quickly, and they understand it, what I'm going to do for back up if it fails. And I back up, even if they excel sometimes. I make decisions about what children should do what, where children should sit...just logistical things. As far as curriculum, I decide what pages to pull and what I can do if I have time after a movie.
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/12/89

However, it appeared that this "teacher power" was relatively recent.

> I think there's been a real switch and shift in how decisions are made in the district. In previous years, when I first arrived here, it was administration, then it came down through curriculum directors, and then out to the teachers. But now there is much more teacher decision making, and they encourage it much more than they have in the past, and it's been really, really nice.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/12/89

Teachers also indicated that while they appreciated their increased decision-making role, they would like to increase it even more.

> I think that people [teachers] would like to see more [decision-making power]. We [teachers] have a lot of education. We should be able to make some of these decisions. I just feel that we really have been given a lot of decision-making for reading. We're responsible...for teaching what needs to be done and it's a good feeling that somebody says, 'Yes, you can do it. Do it your way, whatever works for you.' In

> general, I think they feel it's ok, but nobody likes to be dictated to, whatever your level is. I think they [teachers] feel it's ok, but that it could be improved.
>
> Ms. Cox, 4/20/89

We began to realize that while there was equal dispersement of dialogue between all the members of the Gamma school district, power was not necessarily equally distributed.

When we asked administrators for a picture of the decision-making process, their responses supported teachers' perceptions that there was a shift in decision-making policy occurring in this district. They noted that there were some instances in which decisions could be generated from the teachers and move up through administrators. The degree for such power at this time seemed somewhat limited, addressing primarily classroom curriculum decisions. Teachers also participated in district discussions related to more global issues.

> I would say at this time, and this has not always been the case, that [decision making is occurring] both from the bottom up and the top down. At the time that I came to the district it was always top down. At this point in time building level decisions and building level interests and input has tended to move decisions upward when it has to do with curriculum/program decisions. When it has to do with anything else, it's pretty much top down.
>
> Ms. Arnold, 4/10/89

Statements like this seemed to confirm that Gamma was a top-down district that was moving toward a shared decision-making model. Interestingly enough, this change was accompanied by a positive sense of direction, rather than the tension that so often accompanies change. We wanted to know more about how this change began to take place. Our data suggested that the assistant superintendent had played a major role in instituting change in this district. Both administrators and teachers noted that Dr. Malik was the driving force behind the policy changes taking place in Gamma.

> In my mind it's because we have a curriculum director that's extremely knowledgeable and has a handle on resources. She does most of her work at the building and teacher level...(and) is bringing all the in-service workshops into the building, everything that she's pushing is building-based.
>
> Ms. Arnold, 4/10/89

> The assistant superintendent, the one who is in charge of curriculum, impacts my life more than the superintendent. She is really a dynamic lady that has really influenced the district a lot. She's been here for several years now. She has been the one who has changed the curriculum (position) from being a curriculum resource person at the administrative building, to having a curriculum resource person in each building which gets teachers in contact with an immediate department right away, which is a huge help to us.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/10/89

Dr. Malik believed that teachers' voices should be heard in curriculum decision making. In Gamma, this voice was empowered through the use of teacher committees to examine school issues. For example, when Dr. Malik was asked about curricular decisions, she said that the role of teacher committees was strategic and bottom up:

> The teacher group makes a recommendation, the recommendation goes to the principal group, and the principal group approves it. Then it goes to the board, and the board is very supportive of that committee process, so that, typically by the time it gets to the board they realize that it has gone through this process. They tend to approve.
>
> Dr. Malik, 4/10/89

Teachers, administrators, and the school board all seemed well aware of, and committed to, this purposeful change in the direction of decision making, as Ms. Ploughman remarked:

> Okay, we're in the process now of doing a whole lot of building-based staff development. The process we are using was a decision made again outside of the building; that we would be trained in a certain leadership style, that we would bring in consultants to help us (form) leadership teams within the building, and that we were to develop those teams and we were to develop some action plans using that model. That was not our decision to make, but once that model was in place within the building, we can operate that model however it fits our building.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

It became apparent that leadership in Gamma was not simply the result of individual initiative or style. Rather, the district had made a coordinated effort to train school leaders using professional sources outside of the school community.

> It came out of one of the Learning Labs in Kansas City, Missouri. It's (a means of) establishing total staff involvement into some decision making.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

Training occurred within a specific framework of beliefs and attitudes that would serve to communicate a sense of cooperative commitment--a framework one principal called a "collegial model" of decision making.

The collegial model was grounded in "A People Philosophy"--a set of beliefs that operationalized a sense of relationship between administrators and teachers. The tenets of the "People Philosophy" were published as a handout and disseminated throughout the school district.

***A People Philosophy***

*People are an organization's most important asset.*

*People represent the largest investment of the organization.*

*Organizational success is the sum of the successes of its people.*

*The key to organizational success is the people relationships which emphasize open and honest communication and sensitivity to needs and feelings.*

*People want to be productive and successful.*

*People like to have an impact on those things which affect them.*

> *People like to be treated as mature, thinking and contributing adults and can be trusted to apply these qualities for the good of the organization.*
>
> *The person who knows the best way to improve a job is usually the one doing it.*
>
> Artifact, Gamma I School, 4/22/89

Gamma's People Philosophy was the foundation upon which structures for dialogue were based and were implemented. This philosophy was communicated to teachers by administrators through workshops, school literature, and verbal feedback. The People Philosophy served to communicate the belief that "the person who knows the best way to improve a job is usually the one doing it." Ms. Green told us, for example,

> Our principal is also really instrumental in allowing us to make decisions at our level because she says, "You know your students, you know what your students need. Maybe what your classroom needs may be different than what another classroom needs."
>
> Ms. Green, 4/12/89

While it was clear that Gamma had a belief in the empowerment of teachers as decision makers, there was also an administrative agenda that members of the leadership team worked very hard to implement. Ms. Green, a member of the leadership team, described the strategy this way:

> We couldn't go to the teachers and say, "Ok this is what we learned and this is what you should do." It was suppose to be teacher initiated, and that takes a whole lot more thought, and working with kid gloves than saying, "Ok, this is what we are going to do." Not only was it to be teacher initiated as to what we were going to do, it was also going to be teacher initiated as to how it was going to be implemented.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/19/89

When the superintendent discussed the current science curriculum under review, it was clear that the administration had a direction in mind, and that leadership communicated this in a manner that would allow the committee to feel that they had initiated the direction. This account also described how a "productivity through people" influenced decision making in Gamma:

> Let me just talk about another study, the science study that is underway, the science review, because it's a little different approach. The science people came together. Dr. Malik used some of the high school science people as advisors to the committee or consultants, as well as some outside consultants, and she had some biases in the direction she would like to see the program going, but she knows how to work with a group so that they come to that conclusion. The conclusion was not to have a textbook, but to have a hands-on science program that would be developed by, into units, by our staff people actually in conjunction with our neighboring district, we would do it as a cooperative venture.
>
> Dr. Rand, 4/10/89

## Assessment

In this district, assessment occurred at two levels--formal assessments that were required by the district and classroom level assessments. Formal assessments included the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, The Cognitive Abilities Test, The State Tests in Math and Reading, and the middle and end of the year basal

tests. While the underlying theme of assessment at both levels was communication, the types and functions of the assessments used at the two levels differed (see Figure 3).

**[Insert Figure 3 about here.]**

District Level Assessment

Communicating to the community

District-mandated assessment served two functions: (a) it served as a means of communication to the community as consumer, and (b) it was used to evaluate and modify curriculum. Formal assessments were used to report the effectiveness of the Gamma schools to parents and other members of the community.

> It's a very test-conscious community. We give the Iowa test every year starting at the third grade. And the Cognitive Abilities Test, which tells you what the children have to work with and what we can expect from them. Then you get a correlation between what they're achieving and what they should be achieving. If they should be doing lots and they're not, then something is the matter.
>
> Ms. Arnold, 4/10/89

Another aspect of the responsiveness to the consumer--a demonstration of the school's ability to not only meet the needs of the students, but to challenge them to be the best that they can be--was also addressed by the use of formal assessment. Ms. Mitchell, a board member, stated:

> The things that we expect are that our students are able to perform at a certain level. That, I believe, we expect district wide.....I think it is important that a community understands how the students perform. We have a very well-educated community, and they demand a great deal from the schools.
>
> Ms. Mitchell, 4/10/89

This was also supported by parents and administrators. Ms. Anderson, a parent, mentioned:

> A lot of times they come back, they report them to the parents. We see them. We see where we averaged nationwide. We see where a school or a student averages in relation to their community.
>
> Ms. Anderson, 4/10/89

All administrators mentioned that the results from district tests have always been high compared to those of many other districts. It was also felt that high test scores were the result of having a good program:

> The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills is okay, but I still think our kids should do well on that, just as a by-product of a good program.
>
> Dr. Malik, 4/10/89

Evaluating curriculum

Both the board members and the superintendent felt that building principals were responsible for interpreting district test results and responding to them. In the event that scores were not as high as the district felt they should be, then an area of concern would be identified by the principal or assistant superintendents. Math scores were cited as an example of this.

> I think some test results we got back from (one school)....in mathematics, the scores were not nearly as high as we would have expected based upon the aptitude of the young people, and the associate superintendent had some conversations with the principal, who had already noted it. They were already beginning to develop some strategies at the building level for how we were going to deal with that.
>
> Dr. Rand, 4/10/89

> It was, district wide, that was a dip for all of us, or for many of us. So it was a suggestion (to add a supplement to the math curriculum) again through the curriculum department. Why don't you take a look at these different things, lay it out for the teachers, see if they would be interested in trying it.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

A supplement was added to the math curriculum that gave students opportunities to review math concepts throughout the school year. This program was titled "Mini-math."

> We've done a little more continuous review of some computational kinds of things, like the mini- math and that kind of stuff, because what we found is that you take those tests in the spring and a lot of the time the kids learned it in the fall so that (if) you don't bring (it) back to their memory, they've forgotten some of that when they take those achievement tests.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

Classroom Level Assessment

The administrators we interviewed all commented that classroom teacher assessments, whether formal or informal, were far more valuable than district-required assessments. Individual classroom teachers were considered to be the most knowledgeable individuals regarding what assessment measures should be used and the degree to which they should be valued and communicated.

> I would say informal things, the observations in the classroom, the teacher-made tests, just working with children to see what they have accomplished. I would say that is the most significant way of testing and the most significant part in our program.
>
> Ms. Arnold, 4/10/89

> I think the teacher's informal judgment on how the kids are doing is probably the best measure.
>
> Ms. Ploughman, 4/22/89

Administrators worked cooperatively with teachers to support their inquiry into areas they felt uncertain about assessing. For example, Ms. Green mentioned going to her principal when she was uncertain about how to assess a student for possible retention.

> When I talked to Ms. Ploughman (principal) about it she gave me the light retention scale, and said, "Fill this out on this child and see how he falls on the scale," and he did. He fell right where he should not be in that grade at all.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/19/89

Ms. Green also noted that whenever teachers perceived a particular need or problem, there were many resources, specialists, and social workers that would aid them in assessing the situation appropriately.

Parents also shared the belief that student progress was best monitored by the classroom teacher. They were well aware that these assessments were often subjective and that assessment measures could vary from teacher to teacher.

> I think they really have the leeway, just looking at what my son brings home as a test and looking at somebody else who had the same unit but under a different teacher and it's a completely different test.
>
> Ms. Anderson, 4/10/89

While all district-required assessments were consistent items at the appropriate grade levels, how teachers used other assessment information, the kinds of assessment information they chose to use, and how this information was valued was a teacher decision in which the voice of the individual was quite distinct. Table 2 illustrates the teacher assessments used in each of our Gamma classrooms.

**[Insert Table 2 here.]**

Gamma teachers extensively discussed classroom-based assessment and noted that they valued it above all other types of assessment (see Figure 4). As a part of daily interaction, they observed and listened to students as they worked in cooperative groups, watched as they worked on learning activities, or examined samples of student work across time.

**[Insert Figure 4 about here.]**

Students were aware of this situated approach to assessment. Commenting on how he felt his teacher determined his grade, one student told us,

> By how you work and what you do. Like she takes her little clipboard around, when we do things, and she writes down what the groups say, and stuff.
>
> Albert, 4/20/89

Students' performance was often assessed in relation to their improvement over time rather than in relation to other students.

> What I do collect are things that I am going to evaluate, and I make those decisions based on how effective they are as a measurement of what they know or what they

> have accomplished. That's individual with everything I give. I look at it and say this would be a good measure of what they are doing.
>
> Ms. Lewis, 5/20/89

Student grades were considered a measure of individual student's progress, not a comparative score. For this reason, teachers often spoke of the affective result of assessment and considered this when they reported student progress. In reference to one fourth-grade student who tested at a second- grade instructional level, Ms. Lewis stated:

> She can get a *C*, that little girl struggles and works so hard and a *D* would just flatten her and say why work.
>
> Ms. Lewis, 5/20/89

Ms. Roy discussed it this way:

> I may think it's a great piece of writing for that particular student but it may not be an "A" piece compared to another fourth-grade student.
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/20/89

Assessment seemed tied to the teacher's inner sense of knowing the whole child. When assessing a child and reporting that child's learning or determining the instructional needs of a student, teachers all spoke of a voice within themselves:

> I probably do more things inwardly than I do outwardly...when someone asks me why I do something, I'm going to tell them that I do it because it's a gut level feeling here
>
> Ms. Green, 4/12/89

> Some kids might have a *B* in their percents, but that doesn't necessarily mean that I am going to give them a *B* or an *A* or whatever. A lot of my own gut feeling and observation goes into that grade too.
>
> Ms. Lewis, 4/20/89

> My thing is that I say, well not every grade is in the grade book. And it's subjective...I think of class participation.
>
> Ms. Cox, 4/20/89

> Well, a lot of it is done just in my mind I think, sometimes.
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/12/89

In this manner, when the dialogue of assessment focused on individual learners, we found the conversation was a complex one. A test score or portfolio was not enough. Teachers sifted through all the items represented in Figure 3 before they could make sense of a student's learning progress.

Assessing Instruction

To assess the effectiveness of their instruction, teachers chose formal or teacher-made tests, as well as informal measures such as worksheets, oral participation, samples, etc. Teachers then made decisions either to reteach or to provide instruction on new areas.

In Ms. Lewis's classroom, for example, worksheets might be used to monitor student progress and determine individual needs. On one day of our observation, a worksheet on sequencing skills was selected by Ms. Lewis's team. When asked what was done with worksheets such as these, Ms. Lewis responded:

> We check them in class, and correct if necessary. I collect them, look over them and write comments. These are used to tell me what and who I need to reteach. Some grades are recorded; some are not. I decide based on the skill or whether or not I believe it would be an accurate picture of the student's level of mastery.
>
> Ms. Lewis, 4/20/89

In Ms. Cox's classroom, students were given instructional materials dealing with the use of quotation marks in interview questions. Ms. Cox, surveying the work being done by students after instruction, mentioned:

> I'm going to stop you for a minute, because you're not quite understanding what I'm asking. She then began to question the group as to the function of quotation marks.
>
> Ms. Cox, 4/20/89

In Gamma, all teachers interviewed felt that the type and use of assessments should accommodate individual differences. Teachers experimented with their assessment practices in order to reach what they felt was an accurate assessment of a child's learning that took special learning differences into consideration. Ms. Green told us:

> Brad has a language difficulty. When I give dictation, he is forever asking to have things repeated. So we did a mental imagery last time when we did spelling. I gave them the first sentence where I just gave it normally to see how many people would ask to have the sentence repeated. Then the second time I gave a sentence, I did it with mental imagery where they were to close their eyes, visualize the sentence, and then write it down to see what the difference was. I learned a lot of different things. One was I learned that when there was a longer sentence, that you need to give it in shorter segments or they can't keep up with it. And another thing that I learned was that if there is a word used differently in a sentence than what they are used to, you need to explain it because they get so hung up on that, that they can't visualize what they are doing.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/19/89

In the same classroom, Ms. Green had a student, Matthew, who had missed several weeks of school because of surgery associated with spina bifida. Matthew negotiated in the classroom with crutches and a wheelchair, and it was difficult for him to respond on paper and pencil assessments. He required a great deal of additional time to finish math problems, for example. Ms. Green accommodated this difference: Stopping the class during a mini-math lesson, Ms. Green told the class, "Excuse me, Matthew needs quiet. Ok, let's help Matthew." Ms. Green then read the problem for Matthew, "Twenty-three students are in the class, fourteen are..." As she was reading, she noticed that Brian was

distracted. While reading the rest of the problem, she leaned over to Brian, nose to nose in a whisper but loud enough for Matthew to hear also. Brian quickly focused attention on the problem. The class helped Ms. Green verbally walk through the events of the problem, and Matthew was called upon to respond to any questions involved in solving the problem. Matthew then gave the answer to the problem.

For some teachers, greater emphasis on individual learning took precedence over test scores. Ms. Roy told us that students have different qualities as learners; some, for example, are more verbal. She felt it was important to know your students when assessing learning.

> I just think you can get to know the kids well...you don't need to give all those tests. (If a student does poorly on a test it may be) It was a bad day, so maybe, I'll give them a second chance.
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/12/89

Assessing to empower student learning

Students in Gamma were active participants in the dialogue of assessment. Teachers encouraged students to assess their own learning, as individuals or as cooperative groups. For example, both Ms. Green and Ms. Lewis asked their students to use continuum scales to assess how they had worked socially as well as academically.

> Ms. Green: Now turn your sheets over and make two continuums. On one continuum designate the points quiet and loud. On the other designate the points helpful and what word would be the opposite of helpful?
>
> Students draw continuum on the back of their papers and assess themselves and also how their group has functioned.
>
> Fieldnotes, Ms. Green's Classroom, 4/12/89

Students in all of the Gamma classrooms we observed assessed one another, supporting the district initiative for cooperative learning. In Ms. Roy's classroom, two students were asked to administer a posttest to another student. In Ms. Green's room we heard,

> Jed, Mark--you reviewed the vocabulary words, did you test Brad?
>
> Ms. Green, 4/12/89

Ms. Lewis told us that she may tell her students,

> I want you to discuss in your groups how you feel your group did, or rate yourselves on a checklist.
>
> Ms. Lewis, 5/20/89

Implicit in the dialogue that occurred between teacher and student was a sense of "shared" or "cooperative" responsibility for learning. In this context, students assumed responsibility for their role as learners, and teachers became facilitators for that learning. This can be seen in the following:

> I write messages on one of those little memo pads and stick them on their papers. Then they can go to their writing folder and see, "Things I need to work on" and

> "Things I do very well." I mark both of those categories on their papers. And they can go back and see where they need improvement and where they are doing well.
>
> Ms. Roy, 4/21/89

> I conference with my students before parent-teacher conferences and before report cards go home...Even before that. I run off a report card like our report card, and I have them fill in the report card just exactly the way they think their grade is. Then this year I had them write the comments that they think that I might write about them as students. It was so incredible. I had them do that and I put them aside, never looked at them. I made the report cards and I compared them and they were so incredibly the same it was unbelievable.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/19/89

Ms. Green also used this assessment information to enrich the dialogue about a child's learning with parents. She added that during parent conferences,

> I can say look, there is a big discrimination between what he felt happened within that group and what the other students felt happened within that group.
>
> Ms. Green, 4/19/89

There were many other examples of teachers and students actively communicating and perpetuating the dialogue of assessment. The dialogue reflected the journey of learning for an individual, whether in a cooperative or individual context.

We wanted to know the genesis of this dialogue between students and teacher. Our answer came from the voice of teachers unrestrained by a boundary of district mandates. While the district had a specific agenda of instructional and curricular goals for students, teachers felt that the affective and academic progress of each individual student was their primary goal. In the event that there was a conflict between district goals and individual needs, the individual took precedence.

> Academically, I mean, I have goals for kids...to become more independent learners, to take initiative, instead of having everything have to be said to them, that they begin to say, "Oh I'm writing this, I need to go to use the LRC because I don't know enough about the subject...I want students to take initiative in their learning.
>
> Ms. Lewis, 4/20/89

## The Tapestry of Gamma Decision Making

Gamma was a district previously driven by administrative decision making. By the well-concerted effort and coordination of all of the participants, decision making was beginning to be initiated by teachers. School in Gamma meant offering the community and its students the very best education possible. Striving for excellence was an ongoing process.

The change occurring in Gamma was accompanied by a feeling of cooperation, rather than the resistance and disagreement characteristic of many such moves. In our examination of how this cohesive sense of direction was perpetuated, we found the metaphor of corporation useful. Many of the characteristics discussed in the popular best seller, *In Search of Excellence* (Peters & Waterman, 1982) were visible in our data from Gamma.

The two most visible characteristics of Gamma were intense and constant communication between parents, administrators, teachers and students, and the high productivity of many people working together to achieve a common goal. We found that, like excellent companies, these characteristics were facilitated by various school and cross-school teams, a plethora of workshops designed for staff development, classrooms in which experimentation was encouraged by school support for teacher initiatives, and a high degree of parent visibility and participation.

The search for excellence was augmented by the desire to be responsive to, and satisfy, the consumer. Both teachers and administrators felt that the voice of parents was a strong one, and Gamma wanted its consumers to know that the district was responsive to parental input. Assessment was used as an avenue to respond and communicate. District assessments, both state and national, communicated Gamma's excellence to its consumers.

It was interesting to note that the change in decision making was accompanied by a change in classroom assessment practices. In the past, teachers in Gamma had relied mostly on traditional basal tests and worksheets, more formal measures of assessments. Accompanying the change toward a collegial model of decision making, teacher autonomy was reflected in both their choice and uses of assessments. Our observations and interviews suggested that all teachers chose from a variety of informal and formal assessment measures.

We found it was just as significant to state what we knew assessment "was not" in Gamma, as to state those things that we knew assessment "was":

> Assessment of students did NOT always mean a group test in which individuals were graded on a scale in relation to the performance of others.
>
> Assessment of students WAS a practice of selecting various items for individual students that reflected the students' singular journey of learning.
>
> Assessment was NOT always a practice defined by concrete measurements.
>
> Assessment WAS often abstract, reflective of what teachers often described as an "inner knowing" of what a child had learned.
>
> Assessment was NOT always an objective report of scores.
>
> Assessment WAS at times subjective, taking into account the affective consequences of reporting a low score.

All of these factors presented us with a multifaceted view of assessment practice in Gamma. Teachers were concerned with individuals. Evaluating students accurately, as individual learners, mattered. Because of this, the overall pattern of how teachers used assessment was not something that could be defined by procedures or materials. What could be identified was that assessment in Gamma involved what we came to know as a dialogue. It was a dialogue that involved conversing about assessment with many people: school resource personnel, administrators, team members, parents, and students. Whether speaking of instructional practices or the progress of an individual student, the focus of the conversation was on improvement. Improvement was part of the ongoing search for excellence that we had come to see as characteristic of Gamma.

**Table 1**

**Demographic Data for Gamma**

| | Total Enrollment K-5 | Average Class Size | % White | % Black | % Hispanic | % Asian | % Native American | % Low Income | Student Mobility Rate | % Not Promoted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gamma I | 693 | 24 | 91.9 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 6.6 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 13.6% | 0.1 |
| Gamma II | 463 | 22 | 94.4 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 2.8 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 32.8% | 0.4 |
| District Average | | 25 | 93.1 | 1.4 | 0.6 | 4.7 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 12.4% | 0.7 |

**Table 2**

**Teacher Assessments in Gamma**

| | Green | Roy | Lewis | Cox |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Portfolio | X | | X | |
| Samples | X | X | X | X |
| Student self-assessment | X | | X | X |
| Teacher judgment | X | X | X | X |
| Informal notes | | X | | |
| Student conferences | X | X | | |
| Observation | X | X | | |
| Class participation | | X | | X |
| Anecdotal records | | X | | |
| Checklist | | X | X | |
| Teacher made tests | | | X | X |
| Basal | | | X | X |
| Other Publisher | X | | | X |

Figure 1

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FROM THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

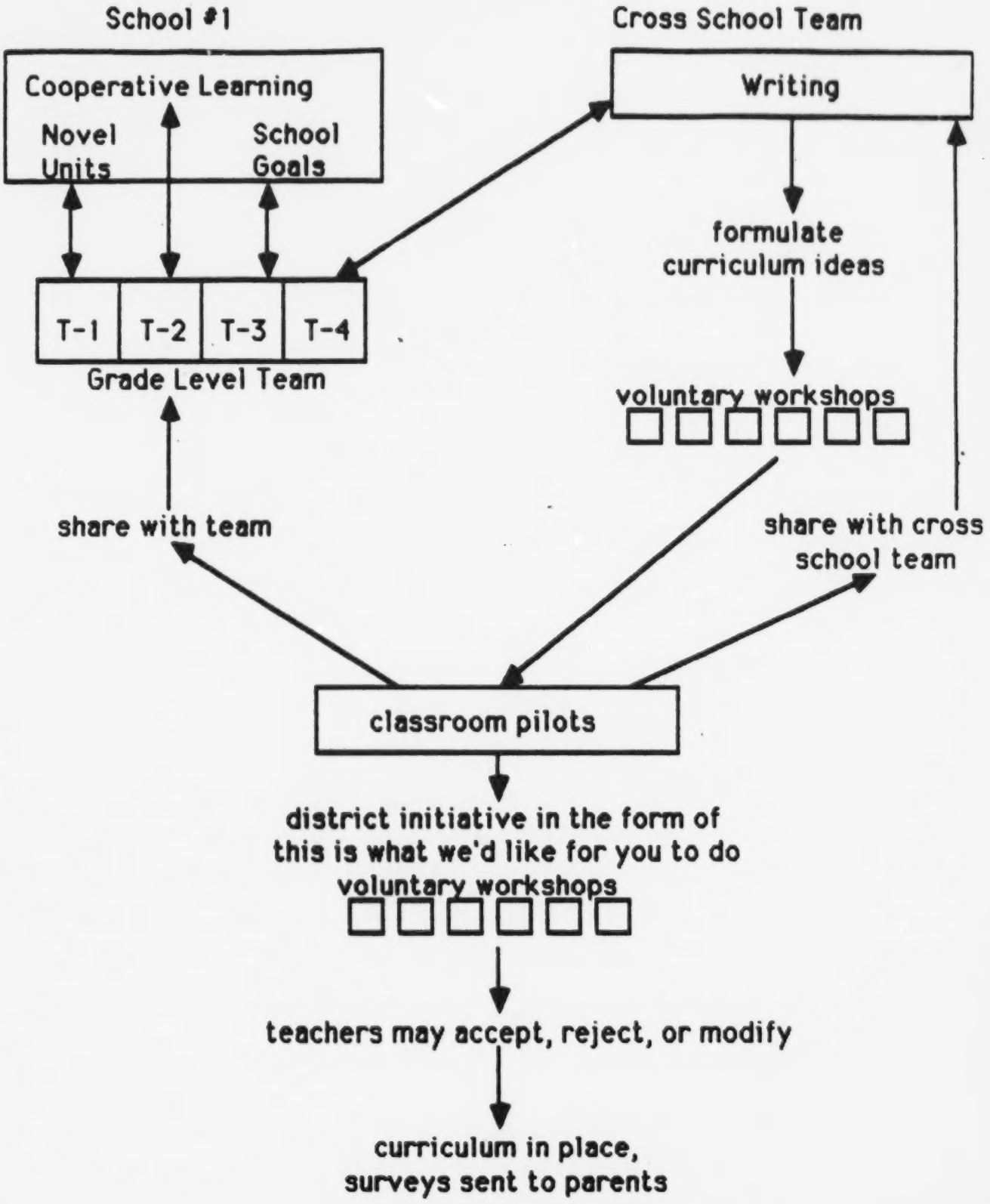
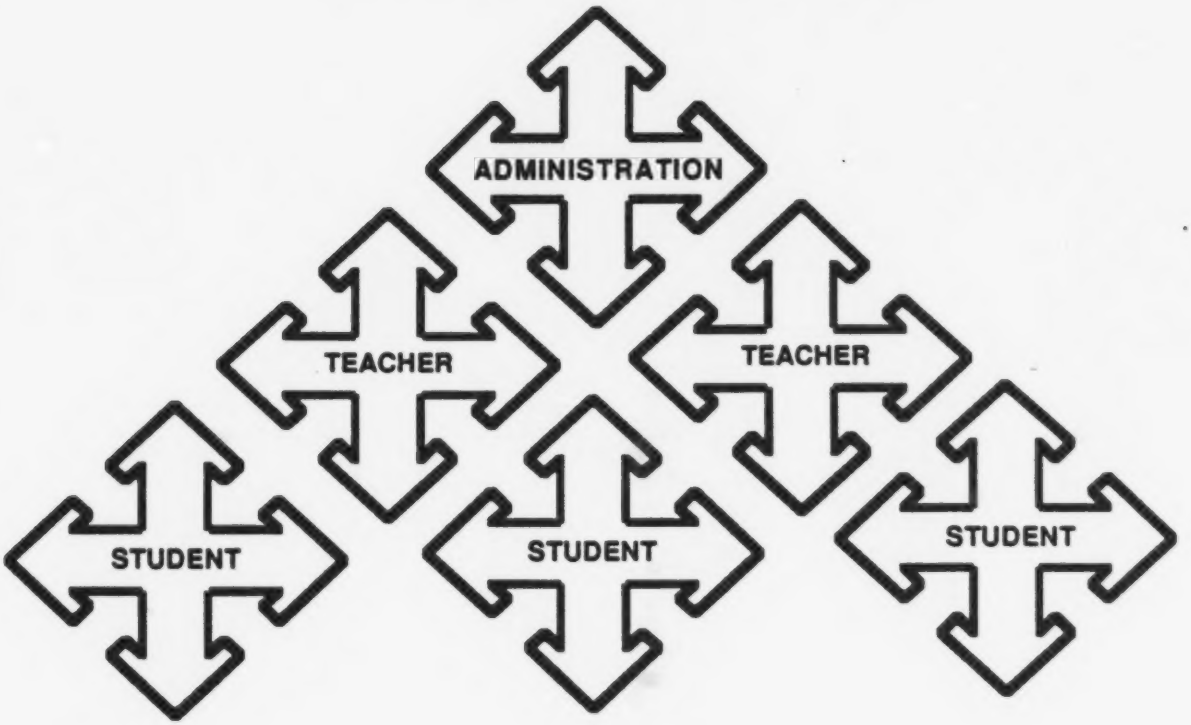


Figure 2

## GAMMA MODEL OF DECISION MAKING




WHITE BACKGROUND REPRESENTS COMMUNITY

1. THERE IS AN INTENSITY OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ALL LEVELS.
2. PARENTS ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.
3. INDIVIDUALS ARE CONSIDERED VALUED RESOURCES.
4. EFFECTIVE TEACHER TRAINING FOSTERS LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT TO NEW IDEAS.
5. THIS MODEL UTILIZES A PROCESS CALLED "CHUNKING".
6. CLASSROOMS ARE OFTEN USED AS LABORATORIES TO TEST IDEAS.

**Figure 3**
**Uses of Assessment: Teachers' Perspectives**

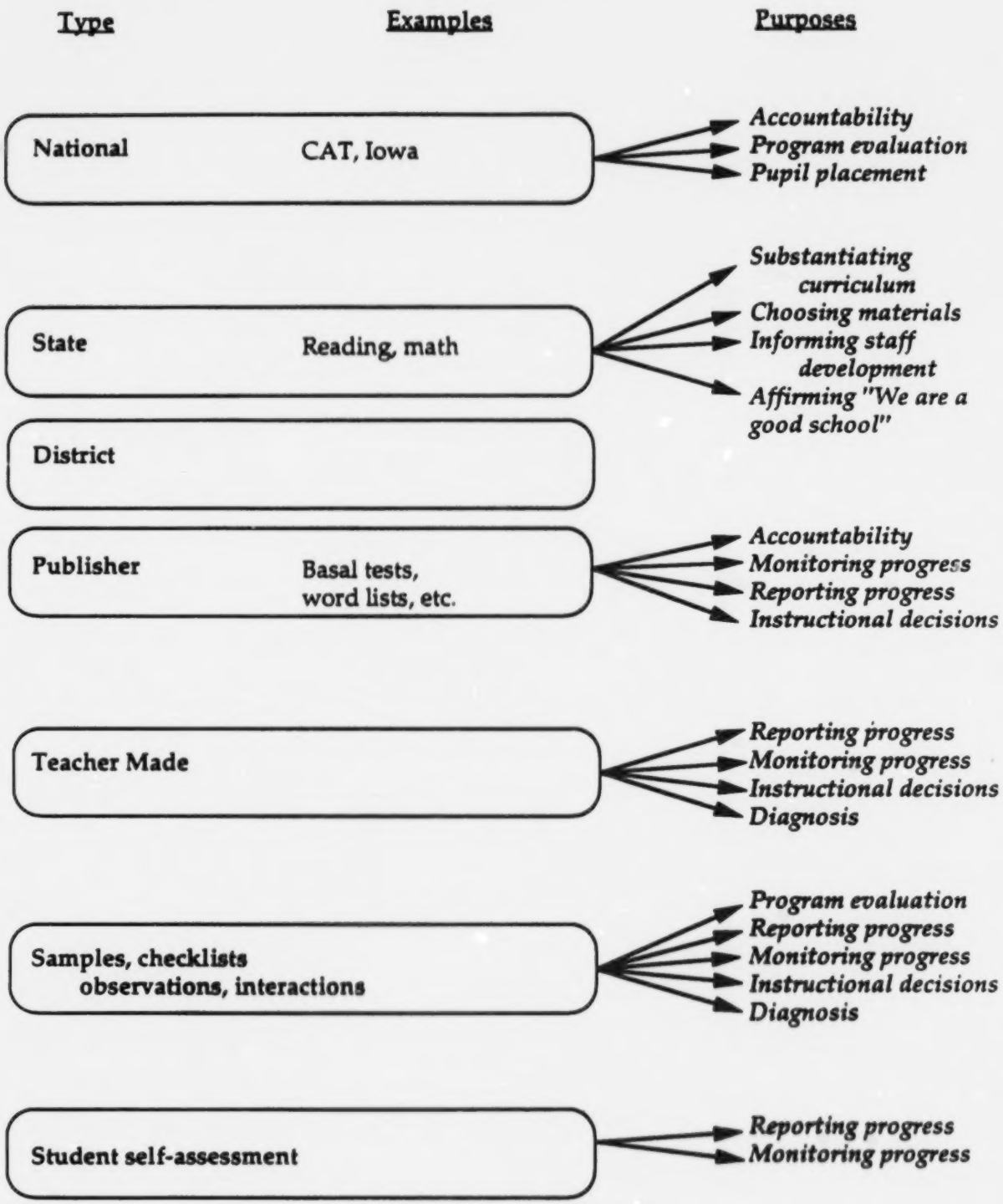
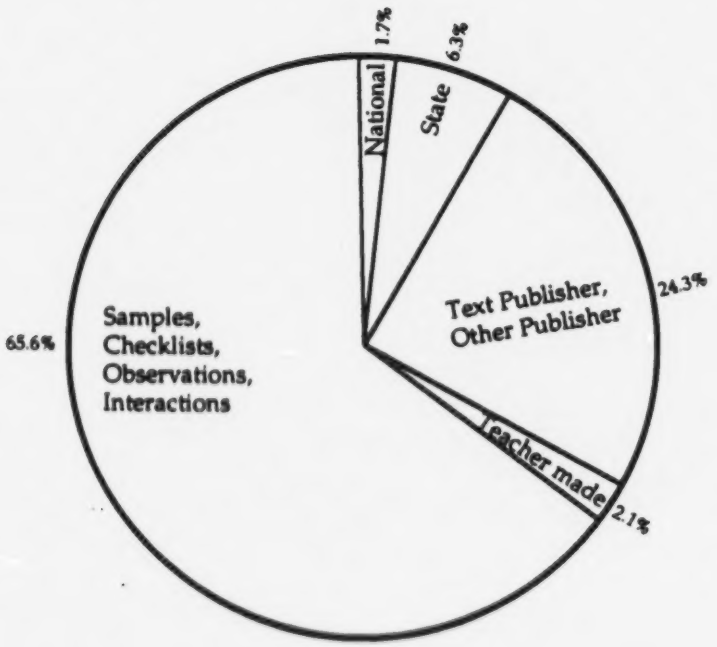


**Figure 4**
**Approximate Amounts of Teacher Talk,**
**by Type of Assessment**




| | | % of Talk |
|---|---|---|
| National | 20 lines | 1.7% |
| State | 73 lines | 6.3% |
| District | 0 lines | 0.0% |
| Text Publisher, Other Publisher | 280 lines | 24.3% |
| Teacher Made | 24 lines | 2.1% |
| Samples, Checklists, Observations, Interactions | 757 lines | 65.6% |

# Appendix A

University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign

**Center for the Study of Reading**

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# An announcement about a proposed research project at the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

A group of us at the Center for the Study of Reading have recently been involved in research on assessment. In addition to our work with the state-wide assessment here in Illinois, we have also been studying the role of reading assessment in schools nationally; for example, we have recently completed an extensive national survey to try to better understand the relationship between reading assessment and instruction in our nation's schools.

As a follow up to that broad survey, we are interested in trying to understand the same assessment-instruction relationship from a much more "contextualized" perspective--by working with teachers, administrators, students, parents, and policy-makers to understand how that relationship works in "their" school(s). So we are designing a national study, with four to six districts in Illinois and a like number from outside the state. In each district we would like to select two schools and four classrooms (two per school) to work with more intensively.

We would talk with administrators, school board members, parents, teachers, students and support personnel in order to understand decision making from a variety of perspectives. In addition, we'd like to spend a goodly part of each of 4-8 school days, over the next four months, observing two teachers in each school. We want to understand the kinds of decisions they make on a daily basis and how they use a variety of formal and informal assessment practices to make those decisions. So we would not only observe but also talk with them about those observations.

We see this research as an opportunity for us to better understand classroom practice and teacher decision-making, particularly from the perspective of the data teachers use and how they use it to make those decisions. We see this as an opportunity for the teachers, schools, and districts who get involved to better understand their own practices in the context of how other teachers, schools, and districts approach these same issues. Our intent is to create an environment in which everyone involved has something to learn and benefit from. We would like our cooperating teachers and other school personnel to participate as fully as they would like--perhaps meeting with us to discuss findings and, if they so desire, to work with us as we seek to share findings and insights with a broader audience.

For those who will participate only in an interview, the time commitment is modest, perhaps an hour per person at the outside. For the two teachers per school with whom we work, it is a different story. We realize that 4-8 days of being observed and talking with observers is time-consuming and puts additional demands on professionals whose time is already highly taxed. We realize too that the invitation to become learners in a cooperative venture may seem more attractive to us than to busy professionals. We are hoping, though, that some teachers will see this as an opportunity and work with us to eliminate the research/practice division that so often hinders communication between university and public school educators. Frankly, we do not think we can ever really understand the assessment-instruction link without seeing it happen in classrooms and then having the opportunity to reflect on decisions we observed with the teachers who made them.

In exchange for this help, we can offer these incentives:

- Each participating school will receive a narrative report of decision-making/assessment practices in their school.
- Each participating school and district will receive a copy of our synthesis of the 8-12 sites with whom we work.
- We will hold working sessions so that educators from both the university and the public school can work together to understand and share the implications of our case studies.
- We will also secure tuition and fee for participating teachers.
- The principal investigator is willing to volunteer to work with any school or district level curriculum or assessment planning committees to the degree that they would like his involvement.

This is an exciting time to be involved in education. We think this assessment research offers an opportunity for school and university to work together and to make a difference in the lives of teachers, researchers and children.

We hope you will accept our invitation to become involved.

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# Appendix B

Interview Codes

Slot 1
Talking About

a. Self
b. Superintendent
c. Assistant Super.
d. Board Member
e. Staff Devl. (person)
f. Consultant
g. Principal
h. Teacher
i. Student
j. Parent
k. State
l. District
m. Administration
n. Staff Dev. (program)
o. Decision Making
p. Curriculum
q. Instruction
r. Assessment
s. Discipline
t. Materials
u. Classroom
v. School
w. Committees
x. Town
y PTA
aa. Asst. Principle
ab. Social Worker
ac. Education
ad. Budget
af. Salesman

Slot 2
Type

21 Philosophy
22 Policy
23 Practice

Slot 3
Source

301 Mandate
302 Board of Ed.
303 Superintendent
304 Principal
305 Colleague
306 Staff Development
307 Book
308 Teacher Education
309 Personal Experience
310 Experience as a student
311 Teaching Experience
312 Intuition
313 Can't Identify
314 State
315 Professional Meeting
316 Reflection
317 Source
318 Asst. Super.

Slot 4
Control

401 Self
402 Cooperative
403 Committee
404 Teacher
405 Principal
406 School
407 District
408 State
409 Student
410 Aide
411 Superintendent
412 Asst. Super.
413 PTA
414 Union
415 Ad
416 Board
417 Parent

Slot 5
Participation

51 Mandatory
52 Voluntary

Slot 6
Types of Assess.

601 National
602 State
603 District
604 Text Publisher
605 Other Publisher
606 Teacher Made
607 Samples
608 Checklist
609 Informal
610 Dynamic

Slot 7
Uses/Role of Assess.

701 Accountability
702 Program Evaluation
703 Teacher Evaluation
704 Pupil Placement
705 Reporting Pupil Progress
706 Monitor Pupil Progress
707 Choosing Materials
708 Instructional Decisions
709 Diagnosis

Observation Codes

Slot 1
Task Definition

1 Assessment
2 Behavior Management
3 Classroom Acitivty
4 Planning/ Schedule
5 Non-Academic

Slot 2
Grouping

201 Whole/T
202 Small/T
203 Indiv/T
204 Whole/NoT
205 Small/NoT
306 Indiv/NoT

Slot 3
Content

301 Social Studies
302 Science
303 Math
304 Literature
305 Reading
306 Writing
307 Grammar
308 Spelling
309 Phonics
310 Vocabulary
311 Music
312 P.E.
313 Drama
314 Art
315 Other
316 Health

Slot 4
Materials

400 None
401 Text
402 Basal
403 Trade Book
404 Workbook/sheet
405 Blank Paper
406 Kit
407 Manipulative
408 Computer
409 Tape Recorder
410 Other Gadgets
411 Art Supplies
412 Chalkboard
413 Homemade Book
414 Reference Material
415 Test
416 Other
417 Film/Movie

Slot 5
Type of Activity

(Use only with Slot 1 #3)
501 Telling
502 T/SR
503 Scaffold
504 Discussion

Slot 6
Type of Assessment

(Use only with Slot 1 #1)
601 National
602 State
603 District
604 Txt Publisher
605 Other Publisher
606 Teacher made
607 Samples
608 Checklist
609 Informal
610 Dynamic